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Cultural and training value of geography

Bertha Henderson

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THE CULTURAL AND THE TRAINING VALUE OF GEOGRAPHY*

By Bertha Henderson
University High School, University of Chicago

ACCORDING to the New Century Dictionary, the word "Culture" means refinement, purity in thought, love of the beautiful, wisdom, training and refining the moral and intellectual nature.

In our efforts to put geography on a scientific basis we frequently overlook its cultural possibilities. A great help toward bringing out this side of the subject is its relation to daily events, to the subjects which engage the attention in the best newspapers and periodicals. While we were studying Cotton in the commercial geography class an article appeared in the *Review of Reviews* dealing with the cotton situation brought about by the conditions in Europe. A number of my class came with information gained by reading the article. As a rule, adolescents are not attracted to that class of magazines nor to that type of articles. At another time we were opportunely studying the cattle industry when the epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease swept over the country. Some of our dignified seniors nearly tumbled over themselves coming into the geography room to tell of the reports in the newspapers. Perhaps if they had not been studying Commercial Geography, they would have at least read the headlines, but the point I am trying to make is that the interest is greatly augmented by the more intimate association with the subject in the class room.

Creates An Interest in Good Books

In the same way the study of geography directs the way toward a look into the world of books of travel and description. After a careful study of Panama and the Canal, books on that subject are more likely to attract the attention; and if we have given Russia her fair share of time in the study of regional geography, some of the newer, juster books describing that country have a better chance of being selected from the library shelves. Especially is this true if a taste of the book has been given in finding information for use in the class room.

Stimulates a Desire to Travel

Regional geography stimulates a desire for travel, while physiography and commercial geography make interested and intelligent travelers. I well remember my journey into the Bavarian Alps in company with a large party

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51308

of Americans, most of them teachers, and many of them claiming educational titles. Some of us had studied geography and we had not eyes enough to see, nor mind enough to interpret all the wonderful stories in craig and peak, mountain wall and plunging stream, that were spread out before us during an entire day's travel. With the rest of the party, about three quarters of an hour of this scenery (for it was nothing more to them) satisfied them and they spent the rest of the day playing cards, reading novels, and gossiping. Yet they were people who were cultured, they told me so themselves, and said they had come abroad to add to their culture by studying the beautiful things in the old world. For them beauty existed only on canvas in an art gallery, or in picturesque situations in a dirty, miserable part of a city. Much of the beauty in the world depends upon our ability to see it and to interpret it; a knowledge of physiography lends greatly to this ability.

Develops Social Interests

In a recent address, Rabbi Hirsch said, "Wisdom is knowledge hitched to humanity." Of all phases of geography perhaps commercial geography has the best hitching facilities. Through it we can easily arouse an interest in the social phase of commercial products. When the great importance of such commodities as wheat, iron, or coal is clearly understood it is not hard to stimulate the thought that the producers of this wealth are worthy of consideration; that the health, intelligence, and general comfort of the laborers are important factors in the equation of production; that conservation of exhaustible resources is a question of world wide importance.

Teaches the Library Habit

One of the most potent helps in cultural development through geography is the opportunity it gives for the use of the library in regular daily work. Our subject is not static, but is concerned with the changing, growing, oscillating conditions of our surroundings. In many cases a textbook is behind the times as soon as it comes from the press. To my mind the advantages of the use of reference books over the use of one textbook are manifold. In the first place it gives a broader view of the subject matter. Each author who writes a book has, or thinks he has some new material to add, some new point of view, or some new or different method of treatment. Surely the reading of a number of different authors on the same subject, culling the contribution of each, is more profitable than reading several times over the material of one author. It is a rule of psychology that the mind reaches out for information about things of which it knows something but not everything. At about the third reading of the same page the mind begins to wander into more enticing fields, the effort to hold it to the task becomes drudgery, and the pleasure in acquiring knowledge is replaced by a feeling of repugnance. On the other hand if each reading is a new treatment of the same subject, the presentation from another point of view, enough fresh material is given to hold the attention and to whet the appetite for more. Getting the lesson under these conditions at least has the advantage of variety over monotony.

Gives an Acquaintance with Source Material

At the same time, as a side line, an acquaintance is acquired with the literature of the subject, and with the knowledge that work of this kind is important enough to have engaged the attention of writers, students, and publishers. The students make friends with a few of these books, know what they contain and where they are to be found. As they read they must learn to weigh and judge the worth of each author, must get beyond the notion that a statement is true because it is published. If there are contradictory or differing statements they may be stimulated to go to sources and find the truth for themselves, which is a long step toward scholarship. They may grow into a breadth of vision and tolerance that will at least admit that there is more than one side to a question, and that one writer may be just as honest, just as sincere, and just as wise, when he holds to a certain view of the matter in hand as the one who takes the other side.

Replaces Textbook Drudgery

Most textbooks are dry, prosy reading. In their very nature they are concerned with the clearest statements in the fewest possible words. Their mission is not to attract the reader but to teach him. One of our great educational philosophers said, "Man should be taught as if you taught him not." This principle can not be applied to the textbook. In high school geography we are not alone concerned with filling the mind with facts. Most of the facts we teach are soon forgotten and it is well that they are. In addition to the facts, we wish to throw a geographical atmosphere around the student, pleasant, agreeable, satisfying enough to make him want to keep it after school days are over. One of the helpful means to this end is the ability to read with pleasure, or for recreation, books or magazine articles of travel and description. Many of them are charmingly written, contain valuable information, and hold the interest. Seaching for knowledge in them is a pleasure and not drudgery. Hedge a deep, wide-reaching subject within the narrow confines of a textbook and you have reduced it to bare outlines devoid of enlivening relations, almost to a dead skeleton. Teach the same subject from as many books as possible, with field work, museum material, etc., and the very nature of a geographical topic will be vibrating with life, its radiating lines will run out into many allied subjects, and will awaken interests that lead to wider outlooks and richer lives.

Trains In the Use of Indexes and Bibliographies

Another great advantage is training in the use of the library and books. In order to find the material wanted the use of the index and table of contents must become a habit. After a few bibliographies have been given out on an assigned topic, the students may be given the task of making their own bibliographies. I usually begin this by putting on the reserve shelf the books bearing on the subjcet, and then sending the class to list the books—with author, titles, pages, etc.,—that contain material. Usually I ask that the paragraphs, headings, and their pages be listed with the books. Not long ago I sent a class to the library to make a bibliography on *Coal* and one boy came back with a list of 25 books all nicely classified and divided into subheads. One or two assignments where the books are all gathered and put upon the reserve shelf is enough. After that only the standard books are kept on the shelf, and the students are sent to the card catalogue, Reader's Guide, and Pool's Index to supplement the reserve books. They are also encouraged to go to the college library, the Crerar, or any other available one for books on the same subject. After the first plunge this is great fun. The knowledge of how to use the library is one of the most valuable assets that may be given to the pupils of the high school. I have sometimes wondered if the great slaughter of the freshmen at the end of the first semester in college might not in a small way, be due to the fact that the freshman does not know how to use sources of information. He may be possessed of mental power enough to do the work, yet not know how to go about it. If he knows how to use the library and is accustomed to working in it and making it serve him, some time is surely saved for him.

Library Work Not Necessarily Desultory

The objection may come that some of the essential points of a subject are missed in the scattered study in the library. In this wider method of study each reader fixes upon the points that are essential to him, and surely he is the best judge. Under the wise direction of the teacher the attention will be directed to the essential things and each student will grasp that which appeals to him. We have no right to force our judgment upon the class to the exclusion of the individual bias of the students, and adolescents are very tempermental. The phase of a subject that will appeal to one may have but little interest for another. In one set of papers, 21 in number, handed to me on *Cotton* there were seven different treatments of the subject and each one was good. Yet the 21 had all studied the same books and attended the same recitations. Again, the cry is raised that the high schools have no libraries. When Kitchener was made war lord last year he went to the war office, and as he entered he said to the guard at the door, "Is there a sleeping cot in this building?" "I do not know, sir," said the guide. "Get one," said Kitchener, and passed on into the building. They put in the cot. When the teachers want libraries in the high schools and make their wants known in no uncertain manner the libraries will be put in just as the laboratories were.

Conclusion

To sum up: Through the study of geography we may direct the student to current periodicals and newspapers of a good class, we may stimulate them to read books of travel and description, and arouse a desire to travel, and at the same time we may train them into library habits. We may lead them to respect labor, to appreciate beauty in nature, and to an ethical point of view in the social phase of the study of the great commercial products.

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WHERE OUR PRINCIPAL MINERALS COME FROM

By F. E. Williams
University of Wisconsin, Madison

THE following statistics, given in round numbers only, are taken from Mineral Resources of the United States for 1913 (published by the U. S. Geological Survey). More detailed information and statistics of the less common minerals may be obtained by consulting the above publication. Unless otherwise stated the figures given are for the year 1913. Only the more important producers of the different minerals are listed.

Aluminum.—Aluminum may be obtained from several different minerals but most of the product of the United States is derived from bauxite which is a mineral resulting from the decay of a granite-like rock called syenite.

Production: U. S. 210,000 long tons valued at..............$997,000
France (in 1911) 251,000 long tons.

Gold.—Over 91 per cent of the gold was produced from silicious ores (gold-quartz and gold-silver quartzose ores) and placers (gravel beds). Most of the remainder came from the copper, lead, and zinc mines.

Production: United States	$ 89,000,000
California	20,240,000
Colorado	18,110,000
Alaska	15,200,000
Nevada	11,977,000
South Dakota	7,214,000
Africa (1912)—mostly South Africa	212,000,000
Australasia (1912)	55,000,000
Mexico (1912)	25,000,000
Russia and Finland (1912)	22,000,000

Silver.—Silver is produced largely from the same kind of ores as gold but less than 1 per cent is obtained from placers while a large per cent (between 55 and 60 per cent) is obtained from the ores of copper, lead, and zinc.

Production: United States	$ 40,350,000
Nevada	9,457,000
Montana	7,574,000
Utah	6,814,000
Idaho	5,724,000
Colorado	5,429,000

Mexico (1912)	47,600,000
Canada (1912)	19,425,000
Australasia (1912)	9,700,000
Germany (1912)	8,160,000
Peru (1912)	5,380,000

Iron.—Iron, for the most part, is obtained from some oxide of the metal and the reddish ore known as hematite furnishes a large portion of the product.

Production: United States, 62,000,000 long tons	$131,000,000
Minnesota, 38,600,000 long tons, 62.37% of U. S.	80,790,000
Michigan, 12,840,000 long tons, 20.72% of U. S.	33,480,000
Alabama, 5,200,000 long tons, 8.42% of U. S.	6,649,000
New York, 1,460,000 long tons, 2.36% of U. S.	3,100,000
Wisconsin, 1,020,000 long tons, 1.64% of U. S.	2,150,000

Districts—

Lake Superior, 52,377,000 long tons, 84.51% of U. S.
Birmingham, 4,602,000 long tons.
Adirondack, 1,215,000 long tons.
Chattanooga, 709,000 long tons.

Iron ore is often smelted at some distance from the mines as shown by the following figures for pig iron:

United States	31,000,000 long tons
Pennsylvania	12,900,000 long tons
Ohio	7,100,000 long tons
Illinois	2,930,000 long tons
New York	2,065,000 long tons
Alabama	2,057,000 long tons

Foreign Ore Production—

Germany and Luxemburg (1911)	30,000,000 long tons
France (1911)	16,300,000 long tons
United Kingdom (1911)	15,500,000 long tons
Spain (1911)	9,000,000 long tons

Copper.—Copper-bearing minerals are numerous and widely distributed but the number of important producing districts is comparatively small. The ores of copper are numerous but there are only a few that are important.

Production: United States	$189,795,000	1,224,500,000 lbs.
Arizona		404,279,000 lbs.
Montana		285,720,000 lbs.
Michigan		155,715,000 lbs.
Utah		148,057,000 lbs.
Nevada		85,210,000 lbs.
Japan		161,377,000 lbs.

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